



THE NATIONAL PREACHER.

Third Series.]

SEPTEMBER, 1862.

[Vol. I.—No. 9.]

SERMON XVII.

BY REV. JOSEPH HOLDICH, D.D.,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

MAN'S INSIGNIFICANCE AND GOD'S SUPREMACY.

"CEASE ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"—ISAIAH 2: 22.

Two things are indispensable to undisturbed peace and tranquillity of mind: one is, humble and distrustful views of ourselves; the other, supreme and unfaltering reliance on God. So long as a man depends on his own wisdom, power, and goodness, he must be disquieted and unhappy. We can attain to substantial quiet and an abiding, satisfying peace only when we feel that our dependence is on a Being omnipotent, independent, and supreme, as well as abundant in truth and love. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26: 3.)

To produce in us this twofold feeling—first, a conviction of our own insufficiency; second, a conviction of the sufficiency of God—is the constant aim of the holy Scripture. In fact, it is constantly taught us in the threefold volume of nature, providence, and grace—in the last very clearly and certainly, and in the others

by strong implication if we would but study them aright. True, there are some things in nature, even in human nature, and there are some things in providential arrangements that poor little man, in the pride of his heart, uses for purposes of self-laudation, and which lead him to confide in his own wisdom, strength, and virtue, so that he impiously cries: "I am my own master; who is lord over me?" But it is easy to show that these are only tests of character, given or allowed to draw out his real sentiments, and ultimately to throw him upon God. The design of our present discourse is to show how vain and empty are all human pretensions to wisdom, strength, and goodness; how really dependent we are on the Infinite Being above us; how necessary the conviction of this is to our solid peace here and our prospect of peace hereafter; and how this self-renunciation and heavenly reliance are indispensable to our present and eternal well-being. In a word, we wish to make you see and feel, that man is nothing, and that God is all. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

The grand scheme of human redemption is founded on the principle here laid down. Man is sinful, ignorant, impotent to good, and of himself inclined only to evil, and that continually. God, in his infinite mercy, wisdom, and power, hath provided the means, and the only means, by which rebellious man can be restored to holiness, to the favor of his God, and to life everlasting. For this purpose he gave his only-begotten Son to suffer and die for us, and Jesus "was made unto us, of the Father wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." By this scheme, while all the benefit is man's, all the glory belongs to God. The terms prescribed in the Bible by which we become personally and savingly interested in Christ, are such as most effectually to establish in us this conviction. We are simply to repent of our sins, and believe with an appropriating faith in the Son of God. Now, in repentance there is no merit. It is simply that state of mind which is required of us in view of the sins we have committed. And as little merit is there in faith; for this is simply the recognition of the ability of another to do that for us which we confess our inability to do for ourselves; or it is the acceptance of Christ as our expiatory sacrifice, and a cordial reliance on him as our sin-atoning offering. For "by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God;" "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And so, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But while there is in all religiously instructed people a readiness to concede to Christ the merit of our salvation, there is in them, in common with others, too much disposition to rely upon ourselves and our own arrangements for success in temporal and physical things, and to claim the merit of it if we do succeed.

It must be acknowledged that there are various things that

have a tendency to produce within us a feeling of self-dependence, and lead to the ignoring of the divine power and efficiency. There is in us too often an idolatry of human agency and natural or artificial instrumentalities, an idolatry of intellect, wealth, and power, and too often these occupy in our souls the place of God. We look so much to them, and depend so much on them, that we lose our hold of God, and even banish him from our theory of living.

Let us observe more particularly, that in the order of nature causes produce their legitimate effects, so that if we can secure certain antecedents, we feel confident of corresponding results. This grows out of the original, the native intuition of the soul, that the laws of nature are uniform and invariable. Guided by this conviction, we always employ the appropriate agency to bring about a desirable end. We plow the ground and sow the grain if we would gather a harvest. We lay a solid foundation and build substantial walls if we would have a strong and durable edifice. A commander of an army calculates well his force before he ventures to meet his antagonist. If he have not an equal number with the enemy, he relies on some other advantages, such as superior weapons, a better position, greater courage and energy on the part of his men to counterbalance his numerical inferiority. To use all wisdom and discretion in the use of means is a plain duty. To do otherwise, is not only folly, but it is madness, and borders on wickedness. But the difficulty with us is, that in our reliance on secondary agencies we too often leave God out of the account. We forget that he is above all means, that he can work without them, or he can frustrate all our means and all our best-concerted plans. He can suspend the operation of nature's laws, or ride over them, or work round them, or bring results out in a way we do not anticipate. Now it seems to me that this was one of the designs of miracles. In these divine interventions God showed his power over nature, proved himself to be nature's Lord paramount, the only uncontrollable and almighty Power. Miracles served in a special manner to make manifest the invisible God; to bring him very nigh to the human soul; to connect him directly and visibly with the operations and government of the external world. When the Israelites saw the waves of the Red Sea and the waters of the Jordan part and stand on a heap, when they saw themselves fed morning by morning with mysterious and heaven-sent manna, when they saw the water gush from the smitten rock, "and they drank of that rock that followed them," when they saw "the sun stand still in Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Aijalon" at the command of Joshua, or the iron arise from the bottom and float on the surface of the Jordan at the word of the man of God, how could they fail to see the hand of God in them all? Surely there was "no nation that had God so nigh unto them" as the Israelites "for all things for which they called upon him." Now what is the religious import of all these

facts, and many other such, but that though means are to be used, and the laws of nature are powerful, yet God is above all means and greater than all the powers of nature? Let us learn and feel that "in him we live and move and have our being," and so let us above all things hold fast our faith in God. And if it be asked, Why are there not miracles now? we reply that we do not need them. They have done their part; they have borne their testimony; God has spoken unequivocally by and through them. Their record is in the book which is now given to us as the history of God's dealings with our lower world, with the human family; and if any man believe not the book, the things written by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, neither would he be persuaded if one rose from the dead or if any other miracle were performed.

Let us again see how God has taught us not idolatrously to confide in human efficiency. There is nothing that men are more disposed to confide in than superiority of intellect. The temptation to this is very strong. The homage paid to intellect, the influence which it generally acquires, the renown which it secures, the attention and consideration which usually accompany it, tend greatly to lift up its possessor in his own conceit. Besides, there is a tendency to forget all moral virtues in our admiration of genius. Bad men of acknowledged talents, splendid or magnificent parts, are generally preferred to virtuous mediocrists. We overlook a man's vices in consideration of his brilliant powers. There is an idolatry of talent which is at variance with good morals and inconsistent with the recognition of God's claims upon us. How do we wink at the faults of great men, call them by such mollifying terms as tend to palliate if not justify them, suggesting ideas far below the stern demands of truth and justice? Our standard of estimating men is not God's. We regard talent first; he regards goodness first. We forget a man's vices in his genius; God reverses the order, and says: "Unto that man will I look who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." How kind and gracious it is that the Saviour makes purity of heart, with meekness and love and blamelessness in life, passports to his favor, rather than brilliant genius or magnificent talent.

Yet God has given us reasons sufficient, one would think, to abate our idolatry of human talent.

For, in the first place, the largest capacity of man is really very small. Knowledge with all men is very limited, even in those that know the most. It is for the most part only a choice between depth and extent. If men would enlarge the boundaries of their knowledge, and take in many sciences, they are greatly lacking in thoroughness, depth and accuracy. If they would become very

profound, it must be limited to very few things. No man can be profound in every branch.

And again, men of great capacity and uncommon attainments seldom, perhaps never, bear to be examined very closely. Every one shows some mark of inferiority in something. If one excel in one thing, he is deficient in another. Sir Isaac Newton, great as he was in science and philosophy, failed in the common affairs of life. Laplace, the greatest of modern astronomers, whose extensive range of thought took in the whole mechanism of the planetary universe, did not at all justify the high opinion formed of him by Napoleon when he, at the Emperor's invitation, undertook the business of the statesman. Many men are great in some things, few are great in many things, and no one is great in every thing.

But what, in my view, most tends to debase the pride of intellect is the fact, that men of the largest pretensions to mind have been and are still guilty of the puerile, the absurd, the degrading crime of idolatry. That men should worship visible, tangible, perishable objects, that they should themselves make a god, and then bow down to it, shows the intellect of men in a most contemptible, most pitiable light. How well does the prophet Isaiah set forth the folly of such conduct: "The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth"—while he is manufacturing a god—"he drinketh no water, and is faint." The carpenter proceeds according to his art. He cuts down his cedar, he fabricates it according to the rules of his craft; with part of the wood, the refuse, he builds a fire to warm himself or to bake his bread, and of the rest he makes a god and prays to it, and says: "Deliver me; for thou art my god." (Isaiah 44: 12-17.) And yet such things, what we call great intellects have worshiped. Such things were bowed down to and adored by such men as the golden Plato, the profound Aristotle, the mighty Socrates. The modern Hindoos, ingenious, acute, profound, with a metaphysical acumen that quite puts to shame the puny, shallow transcendentalism of modern Germany, tread in the same steps and worship similar vanities, adding to them the beasts of the field, and even trees, rocks, and rude masses of stone, while they acknowledge in all three hundred and thirty-three million divinities. Alas! for the pride of human intellect. What shall we say of our boasted intellectual power, when the strongest minds have fallen into such puerilities? Surely we see the appropriateness of the language of our text: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

There is another view tending greatly to depreciate human nature in our estimation, and that is well calculated to make man think lowly of himself. I mention it with some fear of misconception; but it is true; and there is no fear of telling the truth,

provided it be told in the proper way. The fact I allude to is, that there are so few specimens of unsullied character, even religious character—so few, mind—but if there were only one, it would be enough to show the possibility of it, and thus stimulate us to the pursuit of high attainments in Christian virtue. And, thank God, there are several cases of unsoiled character in the sacred history. No flaw was ever alleged against the beautiful Abel, the chaste and upright Joseph, the faithful Obadiah, with the heavenly seers, Elijah and Elisha, or against Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; and if Moses erred, it was only that “he spake unadvisedly with his lips,” and if this was set down as a sin by the divine Law-giver, it only shows how rigid and severe is his test, especially considering how many temptations and provocations the meekest man had to contend with. But what shall we say of the Job whom God himself calls a perfect man, or of John, “the beloved disciple,” or of St. Paul, against whom no flaw can be alleged? for we deny all fault or appearance of fault in him in the “sharp contention” between him and Barnabas about John Mark, who was sister’s son to Barnabas, for the fault was all with Barnabas, and Paul was blameless; and he was commended by the brethren to the grace of God, while nothing of the sort is said about Barnabas. But, after all, how many of whom better things might have been expected have been painful specimens of the frailty of human nature and its fatal tendency to sin. Beginning with our first parent, Adam, and passing over Cain, his first-born son, to Noah, and then to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Aaron, and David, and Solomon, how do all tend to humble us, to show how frail is humanity without God? Surely, looking at such failures, one is disposed to cry out with David: “I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.” (Psalm 119: 96.)

Again, we see in the record which God has given of his dealings with our race, a series of illustrations of man’s inefficiency and God’s supremacy. He has seldom used the means to accomplish an end that man would have selected or supposed. What pains has he taken to show his own independence and to “hide pride from man!” Does he save the whole kingdom of Egypt from perishing by a seven years’ dreadful famine? it was by a young, falsely accused slave, wrongfully cast into prison. Does he save the proud Syrian general from his leprosy and restore him to soundness? it was by the ministration of a little Hebrew maid, and simply by washing seven times in the waters of the Jordan, “and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” (2 Kings 5: 14.) Would the Saviour open the eyes of the man who was born blind? he simply makes clay with his spittle and anoints the eyes of the man, and bids him go wash in the pool of Siloam, and he washed and came seeing. Here was no mighty and imposing parade of circumstance; here was no trick, nor jugglery, nor putting of any awful machinery into

requisition to create illusion and captivate the sense. It was simply a word, a touch, an act of obedience prompted by faith in the power of the Commander, and the work was done.

But here I see another assertion of the divine supremacy triumphing over human agencies, and showing how God operates in these affairs. The Israelites are cruelly oppressed by the rapacious Midianites. God summons Gideon to the rescue, who, like a sagacious general, sounded the alarm of war, and summoned a large army out of Abiezer, and Manasseh, and Asher, and Zebulon, and Naphtali. But what said God unto him? "The Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." So Gideon is commanded to proclaim, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return;" and twenty-two thousand men left him, leaving an army of ten thousand. Still they were too many; and God commanded him to bring them down to the water for another test, and every man that drank the water out of his hand was to be set by himself, and the entire number was three hundred. These were selected for the enterprise, and the others sent away. And how were three hundred men to contend against a mighty army with well-appointed officers, and all completely equipped for war? Humanly speaking, it was a forlorn hope, a desperate venture. But it was God's cause, and "if God be for us, who shall be against us?" For there is no restraint to the Lord to save, "whether by many or by few." Gideon had faith in God, and what does he do? See, he divides his little company into three bands. He adopts a simple but unlooked for device. He puts into every man's hand, each having his sword by his side, a trumpet, and in the other a lighted lamp covered by an earthen pitcher. The bands were to approach the army of the Midianites from three distinct points at midnight. At a signal from Gideon, a terrific blast from three hundred trumpets pealed from different quarters upon the ears of the astounded sleepers. Waking up in confusion from deep slumber, they ran hither and thither in uncertainty and terror, engulfed in profound darkness. Another signal from the leader, and in an instant the three hundred pitchers crash and three hundred lamps flash their light upon the dazzled eyes of the vast multitude just aroused from midnight sleep. In their bewildered astonishment there breaks from the three hundred throats in the three divisions the grand rallying-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" and the work is done. A terrible fright, an awful panic seized the mighty host of the enemy, and they ran and cried and fled; and in the darkness and confusion, not distinguishing friend from foe, they "set every man's sword against his fellow throughout the host." The battle was gained, the victory was complete, for who and what can stand against a panic in an army? It is the most uncontrollable of all things, and quite fatal to those who are subjected to it.

Lift now the vail that hides the invisible from our sight, and you see exactly the same principle in operation—the same infinite Being working in the same way. What are the great battles of the world but contests between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil? True, what seems right to us does not always triumph; but this is because we only see the outside of things. Could we look to the end, could we see as God sees, we should, no doubt, discern the reason and approve the issue. But very generally we do see clearly the triumph of truth and right as we also see the hand of God. Papal Spain determines to subvert Protestant England. A prodigious fleet, such as had not in that age been heard of, is prepared, and with an immense military as well as naval force threatens to overwhelm her devoted victim. Proudly, if not impiously, it is called the Invincible Armada. The navy of England seemed no match for her enemy. But see how God can order things. One of the most important of the Spanish vessels takes fire, and while the hands are busy extinguishing the flames, she is captured with a large portion of the funds of the expedition on board. Another important vessel springs her mast, and is captured too. The smaller and more manageable vessels of the English contend successfully against the larger, more unwieldy vessels of the foe. Fire-ships are sent through the hostile fleet, which create another panic. The admiral cuts his cables in alarm and stands out to sea; and finally a terrific tempest strikes the proud Armada, and more than half the vessels are destroyed, the miserable remnant reaching their native coast shattered and mangled beyond all recovery.

Take the great battles of the world. Nearly all of them turn upon some unforeseen circumstances not provided at all in the programme, which can in no way be guarded against. The great Wellington declared that he never could foresee the issue of a battle, as it depended upon so many things which he could neither foresee nor control. Bonaparte never could understand how he lost the battle of Waterloo, which by all the rules of war he ought to have gained. That General Washington gained the battle of Trenton can be explained only on the ground of a sort of fatuity that seized the mind of the British general; and that he saved his army in the city of New-York, when the enemy were encamped on Long Island, waiting to pounce down upon and seize it, was owing to a heavy fog which the Invisible Hand drew over the East River just in time to hide Washington from view and give him time to escape. Surely there is "no king saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength;" for "the battle is the Lord's." "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," but "thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty." Why, then, will not men, in their successes, cry out with the Psalmist: "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the

victory." Remember how the good Hezekiah, when he heard of the immense host brought against him by the proud and insolent Sennacherib, spake comfortably to his captains, (2 Chron. 32 : 7, 8 :) "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And they rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah." Sennacherib defied the power of God, asserting the sufficiency of his force to overwhelm his foe. But the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor and the leaders and the captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And there his own sons, probably mortified and disgusted at his defeat, slew him with their own hands.

We need go no further in the exposition of the doctrine laid down in our text. Let us now turn it to practical account, and see what influence it should have on our lives and conduct.

And first, let me remark that nothing we have said gives any countenance to the neglect of the prescribed means for attaining an end. Because means sometimes fail, that is no good reason why we should expect the end without them. God ordinarily works by means, by certain instituted agencies, and we are bound to conform to his method and plan as revealed in nature, providence and revelation. To do otherwise is disobedience to God, as well as folly in the extreme. How should a man without wisdom make others wise, without intelligence make others intelligent, or without goodness make others good ? You can not expect to reap only as you sow the seed, and if you want wheat you must sow wheat, and if you want tares you may sow tares ; for "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." So if you would conduct a war successfully, a war in defense of justice, truth, and right, you must make all due preparation in men and munitions, in science and in strategy. We might apply the same to many other departments, but it is not necessary. The general law requires that we use all appropriate means if we desire to secure an end.

But in the next place, we should learn not to rely on the means as being effectual in and of themselves. We are too apt to think our means must succeed. We seem to claim it as a right. We think it a species of injustice if they fail. We idolize the means, and this is only another way of idolizing ourselves. We compliment ourselves, we flatter our own wisdom, power, and goodness. And when we do succeed, we claim the honor of it. We say : "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." Or we boast like Nebuchadnezzar, who cried, in view of his splendid capital with its palace and its hanging gardens : "Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty ?" But

the words were scarcely out of his mouth, when the anger of the Lord fell upon him, and he became a lunatic. "And he was driven from men and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws."

But the point we would particularly enforce upon you is, that after having used all the agencies and all the discretion which wisdom and sagacity prescribe, we must still rely upon God for the issue. He alone can give success—he alone is the grand efficiency. David may have great skill and a capital sling and stone; but unless God had directed his hand Goliath would have gone unscathed. It was not Saul's armor, which did not fit him; it was not the cunning stone which he hid in his sling; it was not in his own skill that he trusted; but it was in the power and faithfulness of his God. "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Such be the spirit of our warriors, our armies! May we ever recognize the hand of God, and trust in him alone. Brethren, have our hearts forgotten the Lord? Have we trusted in our own power, and wealth, and resources? Have we relied on our generals and our sword and spear and shield, and left God out of the account? If so, you may see the reason of the Bull Run defeat and the Ball's Bluff disaster. God will be honored and have the glory, and unless we give it to him beforehand, I forewarn you he will allow us to be smitten until we feel our dependence on him and call upon his name. "In their affliction they will seek me early." And nations as well as men have often to be beaten with many stripes before they render obedience to God. "When he slew them then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God."

And pray, since when have our armies been successful in the field? Look back, and you will see that our successes began soon after the ringing address of General McClellan, that Christian warrior, to his army, in which he abjures all praise and directs the minds of his soldiers to God, the Ruler of the armies of our Israel. It was just about the same time that the Secretary of War proclaimed the same great truth, that it is God alone who gives the victory. The clarion-sound of these proclamations stirred the heart of the Christian people of the loyal States, and awakened hope by leading us to faith in God.

The same rule I apply to spiritual things. We are to use all prescribed and prudential means; we are to frequent the means of grace, to pray in public and in private, to read the word of God and devotional books, and attend all the ordinances of God's house; we are to draw reverently, devoutly around the sacred board, and receive the consecrated emblems. But, after all, these can not save us. They are only the means which bring us to God, or they are the ways by which God draws nigh to us. But they

are only means, they are not the end. God only uses the means as connecting links between himself and our souls. But all need the direct influence of the Holy Ghost to make them efficient to the saving of the soul. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." O brethren! let us magnify the Lord our God, and let him be our fear and our trust. Use them as you find occasion, but put not confidence in man nor in means. Let your faith be in God, and in God through the merits and power and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

BY HENRY C. FISH, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NEWARK, N. J.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN LITTLE THINGS.

"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."—PSALM 33: 5.

It is one of Bishop Hall's wise remarks, that if the sun should rise but once to the earth, every man would be a Persian, and fall down and worship it; whereas now it riseth and declineth, without any regard.

This shows how ready we are to wonder at extraordinary events, and to neglect God's best works because of their frequency. Daily blessings are so numerous, and so constantly and regularly supplied, that we forget that they are daily, hourly gifts from the Lord's mercy.

This is our great misfortune. This is our sin. Our common benefits are really the great things. For these we should be most thankful. Alas! that because they are dropped down from heaven every moment, it should become an old story—a common thing—expected as a matter of course, and so awaken no sentiments of gratitude.

Let us stand reprov'd. Let us learn to note God's mercy in his ordinary works. And to help us, let us contemplate the goodness of God in little things.

I. Our first survey shall be in the inanimate part of God's creation.

1. And here, first of all, our eyes greet the light. And well has the wise man said: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." How kind in the

Creator to make it pleasant. Flying from the great central orb with a velocity a million and a half times greater than that of a common ball, it is a mercy that its delicate beams do so fall upon the nerve-curtains of the eye, as to render the sensation pleasant and not painful. It might have been otherwise. And the prevailing color might have been red; and then every thing had been crimson, instead of the beautiful canvas of refreshing green and soft blue, now spread out before us in earth and sky. Or, instead of possessing the three constituent colors — red, yellow, and blue — the light might have been simple white. And then, how much of existing loveliness were lost! The hues of the violet, the lily, the rose, and the emerald of the river, and the purple of the ocean, all were unknown; and the blank, pale lividness of death were seen overspreading the human countenance, instead of the now changeful flush.

Or, to make the thought of God's goodness in the light more impressive, suppose that all the little beams of sunshine were finally withdrawn. Then were our abode a cold, blank, cheerless solitude. Every plant would wither, and every animal perish. Creation's tide would cease to flow, and ancient night would again brood over the desolate earth.

It is related that the dwellers in the polar regions, as their six months' night draws to an end, often put on their richest apparel and climb to the highest mountains, and salute with acclamations of joy the first rays of returning day. Let us be thankful for the sweet light.

2. Behold the goodness of God in the atmosphere which envelops us. How wise and how good that it should surround us on all sides, and yet not obstruct our sight; that it should press upon us with a weight of fifteen pounds to the square inch, and yet we be not crushed or burdened by it; that though softer than the finest down, it should yet waft the fleets of nations; that it both warms and cools the earth; that it both draws up the vapors and throws them down; that it breathes both in the north wind's blasts and in the gales of the sunny south; and that it both receives the noxious exhalations every where emitted, and yet affords for our lungs the pure air which vivifies and warms our frames. Let us be thankful for this daily benefit.

3. Again, see the goodness of God in that very common mercy — water.

In the form of the ocean, it is at once the proud highway of nations, and the play-ground of leviathan; the storehouse of man's nourishment, and the great cooler and purifier of the dusty earth. And how good in God that he hath set its bounds so that it can not pass. In the form of clouds it tempers the force of the fiery sun, and fills the reservoirs of the skies, and drapes the heavens with curtains of gorgeous hues. And how good in God to let it down gently, as from a watering-pot, instead of pouring it down all at once, to overwhelm and destroy.

In the form of rivers and little streams it makes glad the face of nature, and circulates through the veins of the earth, as does the blood through the human body. And how good in God to preserve its density, so that it does not wholly turn to air, and leave the earth dry and sterile.

If you would appreciate this blessing, and ever after be thankful for it, take the place of one dying of thirst; and then, when your eyes are bloodshot, and your throat is black as coal, and your tongue is cleaving to the roof of your mouth, have a cup of cold water thrust into your hands.

Or witness a terrible drought; when the wells and springs are dry, and the sun crisps and scorches vegetation, and turns the soil into a dried crust, and the beasts of the field and the wood go howling abroad, crazed with inward pain and fire, and every thing seems to cry—

“Rain for the land, O God!
Oh! send thy pleaders rain!”

and then, as the drops begin to patter, and the crystal currents are streaming down, see how the little brook babbles over its newly-filled cup, and the humble plant lifts up its grateful head, and orchards, and gardens, and fields are breathing very incense, and all living things are uttering hymns of rejoicing, and you will be led to exclaim: “Oh! the rain-drop’s worth! What a gift is water, poured out from the hollow of God’s hand, and sent coursing through the earth!” And yet, have you ever thanked God for this little common blessing, as the very chickens and birds seem to do when they sip it, and then turn up their throats toward heaven?

4. To proceed: behold the goodness of God in the gift of flowers. A little child, bounding forth one early spring morning, from a country cottage, cried out: “Look, pa, God has sent us three dandelions!” Was not that a beautiful and becoming thought? “God has sent us three dandelions.” How few persons recognize the goodness of God in these little floral gifts! But he who spake as never man spoke, has pointed us to them. “Consider the lilies of the field;” not, look at them, admire them, smell of them, alone, but consider them. Let them preach to you; preach of God’s care, who clothes even these; and preach of his love, who causes them to spring up, even in the desolate places of the earth, so that, as Krummacher says—

“On Alpine heights the love of God is shed;
He paints the morning red,
The flowerets white and blue,
And feeds them with his dew.”

Charles J. Andersson, in his account of explorations in South-Western Africa, makes a special record of coming upon a lovely air-plant, in full blossom, in a wild, sterile region, and of the effect it had upon the company. And why should not we take note of

God's goodness in every little flower that gladdens our sight? If you insist that they are common things — only flowers — then let me look upon them as a great deal more; as the smiles of God made visible to men; as breaths from the upper world; as light caught by the great Wonder-worker, and prisoned up in form; as honey for the inward taste; as "earth's innocents that climb around our bowers;" as meek, brilliant eyes, looking up sweetly upon us at every turn of life, to make us company; as

"Volumes of truth, that speak the mighty God;
Wise, loving, pitying, glorious, ever near,
That bid us trust the ever great and good,
Whose mercy wakes and ends the rolling year."

I say, blessings on the flowers! with laughing dimples on their cheeks, perfume in their hearts, filling the air with aroma; and with pulpits and bells calling us to worship.

5. And shall I forget to mention just here the grasses of the hills and meadows? The Psalmist has not forgot to do it. "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." And by this means we have the glorious enamel that covers the earth. How different if the ground were every where dark and naked! The spires of grass are little things, and yet but for them we had not the blessed fields, with their walks in silent, scented paths, and the joy of herds and flocks, and the downy banks and knolls, and the emerald slopes that fringe the lakes and rivers, and the peaceful lawns where fall the sounds of loving voices. Let us thank the Lord that he maketh the grass to grow.

6. Behold, too, the goodness of God in the changes of the seasons. How monotonous if we had the same climate the year round! What diversity comes from these changes! I do not know which season shows most of God, and should make us most thoughtful and thankful. When it is spring, and I feel its soft air, and behold the silent waking of torpid nature into life, and when the buds are bursting, and the trees are looking "as if angels had descended and wreathed them with the roses of heaven," then I think spring is the loveliest part of the year.

And when summer comes, and the earth is redundant with vegetation, and vociferous with life, and arrayed in her richest attire, then I say the summer shows most of a bounteous God. But then, when it changes into melancholy autumn, "magnificent in its decay," and the orchards are loaded with golden fruit, and the forests with their gorgeous tints are reflecting back the sweet serenity of the sky, then I say, what season like autumn? Winter with its howling winds, and chilling frosts, and whirling snows, is called gloomy. But it is the resting-time of our tired mother earth, for she needs sleep. And it is, too, her enriching time. For the snows are not merely for sleigh-rides. In falling, they bring back the escaped ammonia discharged into the atmosphere from decayed plants, and so fill the ground again with the natural

food of vegetation. A snow-bank is a fertilizer. Snow is the poor man's manure. And besides, it is a warm quilt; it keeps many of the great root family from freezing. And then beyond the utility of winter, there is much to admire in it. How many can remember to have enjoyed immensely its long intervals of clear, cold, bracing weather, and the redoubled brightness of its days, and its protracted evenings, for pleasant excursions across the fields on the snow-crust, or along the well-beaten road, beneath the intense lustre of the stars, and the limpid radiance of the moon; or the sitting down quietly around the blazing hearthstone at home. So that, beyond its usefulness, there is a charm in winter.

Each of the seasons, then, is lovely, and each is illustrative of the beneficence of the Preserver of men.

7. And the same is true of the succession of day and night. Each day we behold the rising of the sun. Aurora has never once failed, during so many ages, to announce his approach; and he knoweth his going down. Thus does he enlighten both sides of the globe, and shed his rays on all. Thus have we the day for toil — long enough to exhaust the physical energies, and call for repose; and then night comes, of sufficient length to recruit those energies. George Herbert sings of "dear night" as "the stop to busy fools," and as "care's check and curb." Think of the accelerating swiftness of care, and pleasure, and wickedness, going on without interruption. What would the mad and anxious world come to, if night did not put on the break, and fetch things to a stand-still?

God knows we want rest. And so, (to use the words of another,) "as a mother stills every little noise, that her infant be not disturbed, as she draws the curtains around its bed, and shuts out the light from its tender eyes, so God draws the curtains of darkness around us; so he makes all things to be hushed and still, that his great family may sleep in peace." And what a mercy that he gently shuts the eye of day, instead of suddenly shutting it; that he gently draws aside again the curtains of night in the morning, and slowly lets the light fall on the face of the sleeping earth. Let us be thankful that the garish sun does not at one bound burst from the bosom of night, and then, when he is ending his course, we are not plunged in an instant into darkness; but that rather, departing day climbs softly up a ladder, as a poet fancies, setting its red sandal first on shrub, and then on tree, and then on chimney-top, and then on the tall elm, and then on church-spire, and then on hill-top, and then on cloud; thus going up from round to crimson round, into the high heavens.

8. Behold, also, the goodness of God in the endless forms of beauty which we meet. God might have made things to appear ugly and uncouth; but he hath made all things beautiful. Beautiful are the heavens above, clear and blue, and gemmed with stars, or black with awful majesty, or streaked with silver and gold. Beautiful is the morning, when the glories of night are being dis-

solved into the glories of the dawn. Beautiful is evening, when the sun shining aslant sets on fire the trees and bushes, and burnishes the fields. Beautiful is the sea; beautiful is the forest; beautiful is the meadow; beautiful are the majestic mountains; beautiful are the birds, and the flowers, and the lichens, and the mosses, and the gushing fountains, and the fields of clover opening their blushing bosoms to the bees, and the winter crystals vailing the pools, or sheeting the ground, or kissed upon the windows by the cold lips of night.

Every thing is beautiful, and every thing is made beautiful by God:

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair."

Let us be thankful for this!

It is said of Linnæus, the great Swedish botanist, that when first seeing a splendid European plant, he fell on his knees and thanked God for thus beautifying the earth. How much beauty do we see around us every day, and yet for this how seldom are our hearts lifted in gratitude to Him who hath made all things lovely to behold.

Our survey thus far has been limited to the inanimate world. And how much does it show of the goodness of God in little things. And now let us pass to

II. The animate (but unintelligent) part of creation.

And here we are at once struck with the profusion of living creatures. The waters teem with life. There goes leviathan, that maketh the ocean to boil like a pot; and there, in almost infinite variety, are the lesser forms of life, running down to the animalcule, so small that one hundred and fifty millions of them would not weigh a grain. The atmosphere teems with life, and the dry land swarms with animals of every order, crawling, creeping, burrowing, boring, leaping, running. Out of our sight are living things. In the air we breathe, in the water we drink, in the food we eat, in the very acids, in the toughest flint, in the pulp of mellow fruit, in the leaves and organs of plants, in the bodies of animals, ay, and in our own bodies, are puny tenants — colonies of unseen inhabitants, too minute to be detected. Every where is life. Life cradles life. Nature at every pore is bursting with life, and every death is only a new birth.

What object could God have had in creating these innumerable ranks of sensitive existence, except that they might taste his bounty, and enjoy a happiness peculiar to their state? Because dead matter was incapable of delight, and because the eternal Sovereign would exercise his superabundant goodness, therefore hath he stocked the world, and worlds upon worlds, with ten thousand times ten thousands of living creatures, that his table might be filled with millions of guests, whose mouths and whose

hearts he might every hour and every moment fill with food and gladness.

Nor has he failed of his end. How happy are all these his creatures! Enjoyment is certainly with them the rule, and suffering the rare exception. I recently looked through a microscope, upon a part of a drop of water, and there I counted some twenty or thirty animalculæ, apparently as big as a large house-fly, frisking and flirting about, as happy as they could be. And the great deep itself is but the magnificent dance-house of its gladsome inhabitants.

The winged inhabitants of the air, too, have a delightful existence. Have you never stood and admired the nimble and orderly flirtations of a pleasure-party of insects, at the rising or setting sun of a summer's day? What a striking comment upon the Divine beneficence, these myriads of happy insects on the wing; testifying by their sportive motions, their wanton mazes, and their gratuitous activity, the exultation which they feel! The birds, too, especially if it be morning, you find attesting their joy. I have somewhere seen published the following card:

"A CONCERT will be given on Tuesday, May twentieth, at half-past four A.M. Robin, Oriole, Thrush, and many other exquisite and justly celebrated musicians, will be among the performers. Price of admission, 'early rising.'"

I am very sure the attendants would come away, believing the birds to be happy, and probably themselves happier for the sight.

And if, turning the eye from life on the wing, you look upon the smiling, blooming earth around, what signs of happiness in other forms of life! How fresh and grateful the herbage to the flocks and herds! How soft the green carpet upon which, contented, they lie down! How tender and succulent the young leaves, to the crickets and grasshoppers that feed upon them, and then chirp away their pleasant hours! How sweet the honey in the clover-head and the flower to the bee, and the butterfly, and the bird! How the birds enjoy the ripe strawberries, and blackberries, and cherries! How sweet the roots and the nuts to the lithe squirrels! How happy the hen, encircled by her callow brood! And the lambkins and the kittens, with their merry pranks, how intoxicated do they seem with joy!

Oh! how much enjoyment in the animal world. Think of it: at any one time, how many myriads of creatures are eating their food, gratifying their appetites, ruminating in their holes, accomplishing their wishes, pursuing their pleasures, taking their pastimes — all so happy!

And all are supplied and made happy by God! "Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." And what a mercy that he has relieved them from fear and anxiety, and denied them the knowledge of coming ills. Walking, one day, in New-York City, I saw a man at a street

corner, holding a pretty calf by a strap around its neck, as if waiting for some body. Said I to him: "What are you going to do with that calf?" He answered: "I am going to kill it, or sell it to the butchers." And I went on my way, thanking God that the calf did not hear that, nor know what it was coming to.

Moreover, how kind in God to care for every one of the millions upon millions of this great needy family of his; expending upon each one an equal care, so that the least insect, living but one brief hour, does not fail of his portion. And how kind to provide for all without their labor—for it is a just remark of Pierre, that there exists not a single animal but what is lodged, clothed, and fed by the hand of Providence—without care, and almost without labor. And yet, again, how kind and wise to cause each one to subserve some useful purpose to man; making even the little flies and all the winged insects to act as scavengers, by taking up and carrying off the surplus effete matter in the vegetable creation; and all the little ground-mice and earth-worms to act as nature's plowmen, or as sappers and miners boring in all directions into the stubborn soil, thus rendering it pervious to air and rain and the roots of plants!

In this survey of the unintelligent creation how much do we see of the goodness of God in little things! Here, most truly, is the earth full of his goodness.

III. But let us pass now into the intelligent world—confining our view to ourselves.

1. And here, first of all, behold our outfit, our endowments. To begin, we find ourselves possessed of a body fearfully and wonderfully made. How much in it to excite our wonder and praise. Think of the heart—a forcing-pump—striking a hundred thousand strokes in a day, and continuing it for fourscore years without getting out of order, or growing weary; and of the muscles, and the various joints, and the several classes of nerves; and of the ear, with its scientifically formed cavities and sensitive drum; and of the eye, with its refracting lenses, and its pictured retina, and its protecting lid and lashes; and of the skin, with its nine millions of little pores, ministering to the comfort and the health; and of the lungs, with their peculiar blood-vessels, and air-tubes, and wrapping-membrane, and muscles to keep them in motion—consider the complexity of this machine of the indwelling soul, and be astonished at the wisdom and goodness of God.

And then, here is the mind, with its subtle powers of consciousness, and reflection, and reasoning; and memory, and imagination—each faculty displaying the divine goodness. And the same of the several senses—of sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell.

And then, what an endowment is the gift of speech, by which we may reciprocate thought and feeling, and become acquainted one with another! Thus endowed, behold, in the next place:

2. How every thing is contrived and adjusted to secure our

comfort and good. What a mercy that many functions of the body, such as breathing, digestion, the circulation of the blood, etc., are performed involuntarily; so that they go forward without our bidding or attention! A writer tells of one who had lost the use of the two little muscles that lift the eyelids, compelling the sufferer to shove up his eyelids every moment, with his own hands. Suppose our eyes were not opened and closed except by this method. Have you ever been thankful that God works much of the wonderful machinery of the body, thus leaving you to attend to other things? And what a mercy, too, that these involuntary motions produce pleasure! An eminent physiologist suggests that the greatest enjoyments of our animal nature may be those which, from their constancy, escape our notice altogether. He maintains that the act of respiration, for example, is attended with a positively delightful sensation. And some one has written quite elaborately upon the pleasure of opening and shutting the eyes. Do not these little things show God's goodness?

And how merciful the provisions for gratifying the senses! How much enjoyment comes to us through the eye! Oh! if you were blind, and compelled to exclaim with Milton:

"Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of eve, or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me:"

if every thing were thus to you a universal blank, and then, if God were suddenly to give you sight, how thankful would you be for it! But you ought to be more thankful now, for you have been enjoying your sight all the time.

Moreover, it is something that the hum of insects, and the gurgling of streams, and the songs of birds, and the sounds of human voices, greet the ear. Says Izaak Walton, (in *The Angler*), upon hearing a nightingale: "O Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in heaven, when thou affordest bad men such music upon earth!" Are you thankful, as you ought to be, for the gift of hearing? And what a mercy, that, while it is necessary that you should eat, food is agreeable instead of disagreeable, as it might have been; and that God gives such a variety of food, animal and vegetable, instead of a single kind, as he might have done! And is it not something that we may smell the aroma of plants and flowers; and that God has hung living censers as it were, smoking with incense, all over the earth—even on the boughs of the trees? and something that we are not numb and insensible to the warmth of the winter fire, and the summer breezes that fan the cheek, and the touch of objects about us, and even incapable of pain—for pain is nature's sentinel of danger; so that if the eye or any part of the body be abused, it may cry

out to us to desist before it be destroyed, (and pain is therefore a kind provision.) It is something then, I say, that we can feel.

Let us, therefore, recognize the goodness of God in his provisions for enjoyment through the senses.

And then what a mercy is sleep, "that knits up the raveled sleeve of care," and recreates us, day by day. Sleep—

"Man's rich restorative, his balmy bath,
That supplies, lubricates, and keeps in play
The various movements of this nice machine."

Oh! how delicious after a day's toil:

"To stretch the tired limbs and aching head
Upon our own delightful bed!"

Ought we not, every night and every morning, to thank God for sleep?

And another merciful provision is the social relations. Blessed be God, we are not alone in the world—doomed to isolation. We live in families, by God's ordering, and have companions and friends; and these social relations, together with the social affections, how vast the comfort and happiness they afford!

These are some of God's contrivances or arrangements for our gratification and well-being; and in all these little things how conspicuous his goodness.

3. Shall I mention, also, God's hourly deliverances as illustrative of his goodness in little things? A man, riding down a steep hill, and reaching the bottom, said to one whom he met there: "I have had a wonderful deliverance." "What is it?" he asked. "Why, my horse stumbled on that hill, and I was thrown over his head and not harmed." "Indeed," said the man, "I have had many a greater deliverance on that hill than that." "And how?" "Why, I have ridden down that hill hundreds of times, and my horse has never so much as stumbled once!" The moral is plain—but how do we forget it! Why, each day, each hour, each moment, has its deliverances.

"Man is a harp whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony disposed aright;
The screws reversed, (a task, which, if He please,
God in a moment executes with ease,)
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use."

Is not the keeping of this harp in tune a perpetual deliverance?

4. And then time would fail me to speak at length of other common mercies, as we call them.

What a blessing, the use of our bodily powers! Why, we ought to be thankful, every day, that we have feet to walk, and hands to handle, and a body in which to enjoy life. "I never complained of my condition," says the Persian poet, Sadi, "but once—when my feet were bare, and I had no money to buy

shoes; but I met a man without feet, and became contented with my lot." And what a blessing, at any time, that we are not suffering painful agonizing sickness! Said a suffering child of God to me, sick for two whole years in a bed: "Oh! what a luxury would a half-hour's freedom from pain be!" Have you thanked God, every day, for that luxury?

And then what a blessing, that, amid life's tumults, God restrains our reason, and does not allow her to be driven from her throne! A gentleman was once stopped in the streets of London by a stranger, who asked him: "Did you ever thank God for your reason?" "I don't know that I ever did," the gentleman replied. "Do it quickly, then," said the stranger; "for I have lost mine." Have you ever thanked God, particularly, for your reason? And then I might go on to enumerate daily spiritual benefits. What a blessing is each precious ray of heavenly light, and each access to the throne of grace, and each smile of Jesus, and each opportunity for receiving good or of doing good, and each hour's inward peace, and each assurance of life and immortality, and each moment's spiritual joy. Oh! the goodness of God in these little things. How great their value to us! How barren of enjoyment were life without them! How kind in him to bestow them, when under no obligation to do it!

And now, the one great practical lesson from all this is, that our hearts and our mouths should always be filled with praise. A person who will not love such a God deserves, surely, eternal death. Ingratitude is enough to destroy the soul. Well is it ranked among the great sins of the heathen: "Neither were thankful!" Remember, thankless soul, that you must be forgiven the sin of ingratitude or be lost forever. Let the goodness of God lead you to repentance.

And let Christians beware of this sin. "Should a living man complain?" Should a murmur ever escape our lips? True, we have trials, especially in these times; but even these are blessings; and then, those which we call blessings are so many and so constant, that they ought to swallow up the sight of our troubles, and envelop us in a very atmosphere of gladness and thanksgiving.

Each little every day mercy is direct from the hand of God. Second causes do not alter the fact. The manna in the wilderness no more came from heaven than do our daily blessings. And shall we fail to recognize them from their commonness? Because God comes each day and each minute, with a gift in his hand, shall we for this fail to notice his coming, or cease to be thankful for it? God forbid! Surely the gratitude should be the warmer for this momentary concern.

Praise, then, is our becoming sentiment. It should be the marked feature of our lives. Every day ought to be a Thanksgiving Day.

"Perpetual blessings from Thy hand
Demand perpetual praise."

Every little benefit ought to awaken a responsive throb. There should be something in our minds, all the while, for which we are inwardly praising God. The Lord pardon us that we ever murmur! God forgive us that our hearts are not like the eolian in the window, ever breathing forth sweet music! A poor slave was once asked why he was going to keep Thanksgiving Day. "To specially tank the great Massa up high, for his precious word, and a pine-knot to read it wid;" was his reply. And Bishop Burnet tells us of passing the open window of a cottage, one day, and hearing a poor female, upon rising from her table, giving thanks thus: "Potatoes to such an unworthy sinner as I am—and salt, too! O God! how shall I be sufficiently thankful?"

Happy the man that is in such a case. And that it may be ours, let us acquire the habit of observing God's hand in ordinary mercies—in our little, common, every day benefits. Let us often think of the goodness of God in little things.

SERMON XIX.*

BY REV. J. FEW SMITH, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWARK, N. J.

THE GLORIOUS LIBERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

"BECAUSE the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."—ROMANS 8: 21.

To secure the highest amount of individual freedom, compatible with the general welfare, is a first principle of the best government. It is constantly regarded in God's government of his creatures. His arrangements are so perfect as to leave to all the highest measure of personal liberty, without impairing his sovereign control over them. Pure independence can exist only in the Supreme Creator and Ruler. On him all creatures are dependent; and their absolute independence is farther limited by their various relations to each other. A state is independent when it is free to manage its own affairs without any authoritative control from foreign powers. The people of that state are independent when their individual rights are fully recognized in the construction and administration of the government. That is the truest individual liberty—not where there is no law, but where law is felt to be not simply a restraint but a protection, and secures a cordial, spontaneous obedience; as a thing not simply imposed from with-

* Preached on the Sabbath following the Fourth of Jul 1862.

out, but recognized as belonging to true manhood governing itself in the light of the highest good. Liberty, in its best sense, implies law—not freedom from law; law gladly recognized and obeyed. It is not simply the doing of each one's pleasure, regardless of all other considerations. It is each one's pursuing his own welfare, unmolested, with due regard to the claims of his associates. Tyranny compels subjection to arbitrary authority, with no choice on the part of the subject; no opportunity of dissent or of spontaneous cordial obedience; with no regard to the personal rights of the individual. Liberty is compatible with a firm government; but the citizen feels that he is himself an integral part of that government, and that the restraints to which he is subjected are self-imposed from considerations of both interest and morality. Such liberty as this has been the grand ideal after which the noble-hearted patriots of all ages have striven with an earnest devotion. It was the germ of all the ancient republics, and the vital principle in the heroic struggles in Holland and Switzerland, in the civil throes of England, and wherever men have asserted their rights and attempted to establish a free government. But no where has this grand idea been so perfectly developed in form and practical working as in our own glorious Republic. No where has a government existed whose theory so largely and completely embodied this idea of individual liberty. And we may add, with all the drawbacks of party animosity and tyranny, and of all that in the system of slavery is at variance with the highest human liberty, no where has this boon and all its attendant blessings been more largely enjoyed than by the people of this land.

It was a grand and solemn day when the American Colonies declared themselves to be free and independent States, and took their stand among the nations of the earth. It was an heroic struggle which they maintained for seven years against great forces, and amid vast difficulties and frequent reverses. And it was a magnificent victory which was gained at last, and a "glorious liberty" which they achieved and bequeathed to their descendants for all time, when they secured the acknowledgment of their independence and the respect of other nations, and a place of equality among them. The cause of human freedom has battled on through centuries against a heavy opposition, and with a progress marked by martyrdom; gaining slowly, but surely, as its history in Great Britain and other European states shows. But, says Mr. Webster, "into the full enjoyment of all which Europe has reached through such slow and painful steps, we sprang at once by the Declaration of Independence, and by the establishment of free representative governments; governments borrowing, more or less, from the models of other free states, but strengthened, secured, improved in their symmetry, and deepened in their foundation, by those great men of our own country whose names will be as familiar to future times as if they were written on the arch of the sky." (*Works*, IV. 134.)

Well may the day that hailed the birth of such national liberty be kept as a great festival; and well may the rites of religion be invoked to grace and hallow its observance, and men be called to praise God for the precious boon, and to supplicate him to continue it to us.

The sounds of its celebration still linger in our ears, reminding us of those earnest and prophetic words of one of the noblest of American statesmen and patriots, written from his seat in Congress on the day after the Declaration was made: the event is one that "ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade—with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bon-fires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward for evermore." (John Adams. See *Webster's Works*, I. p. 150.)

This year our national anniversary has been celebrated with no less of enthusiasm and of public demonstration than in former years; but the sadly strange circumstances of our country have given a peculiar tone to its sounds of rejoicing. For more than the past long year this good land, which our fathers received from God and gave to us, has been distracted by civil war. The fabric of liberty, cemented by their costly sacrifices, has been rudely assailed and threatened with destruction by their own children. With insane folly, blinded by passion, misled by designing, self-seeking men, governed by a mistaken idea of policy and self-interest, a large portion of the citizens of this great Republic have risen up in arms against the best government on the face of the earth, under which they have enjoyed for years unparalleled prosperity and happiness. Readily can we imagine the shades of our departed heroes gazing mournfully on this sad scene, and imploring their children to cease from their madness. The nature of the present struggle—the unjustifiableness of the rebellion—the stern necessity of maintaining the national authority—the duty of every citizen to stand by the Government in its vindication of the Constitution, the nation, the Union—these are themes plain and well established, and not now to be discussed. Only this one thing may I say in connection with our text, that it is a great mistake to suppose, an unwarranted assumption to affirm, that our fellow-citizens of the South who are arrayed against the National Government are contending for liberty and the sacred rights of men. I have no doubt that many of them honestly believe that they are—but it is a gross delusion; and the principal conspirators and leaders of the rebellion know it to be such. They are battling against the very noblest bulwark and tower of human liberty ever erected on this earth, I verily believe—humanly speaking, and without forgetting that God is not dependent on any men or any nations for the accomplishment of his purposes—I verily believe that the cause of human liberty is deeply involved in the maintenance of our national existence; and one

of the saddest blows it could receive, throwing it far back in the course of time and disappointing the hopes of millions, would be the success of this insurrection and the destruction of this Union. And because I believe this, because I believe that our fathers were guided by the providence of God, and with almost superhuman wisdom, to the construction of this government, because I believe that their work was designed of God to benefit the nations and ages of the world, because God has dealt so wondrously with us all along our history, because I believe the cause in which we are engaged to be the cause of human liberty, and of law, and of righteousness, I am ready to uphold it with my voice, and my influence, and my prayers, and any sacrifices that I may be called to make; and because of all these considerations, I trust that God will give us success. I rejoice in the awakened patriotism of the North; I rejoice in our brave soldiers and our great resources. The patriotic promptness of a free nation marching forward to the maintenance of national authority — of law against license — is the grandest epic in human history. But not in all these do I put my trust. In God is my hope — in God, whose merciful regard to us may be seen in the very calamity with which he smites us. Not our chariots, not our horses, not our brave soldiers, not our swift-moving and death-dealing boats, alone constitute our strength. But it is in the grand principles involved, in the hearty trust of the people in God; and then, above all, in God himself appealed to, invoked and honored, that we are to rely.

And therefore, although we were disappointed in our hopes, and instead of rejoicing on the Fourth of July in the great decisive victory that would go far toward quelling the rebellion and finishing this dreadful strife, we were saddened by what seemed to be a reverse, and myriads of hearts were filled with sorrow or suspense by the tidings of fierce battles, in which the best blood of our country has been poured out in rivers. Notwithstanding all this, we have not abated our hope, or thought of turning back from the struggle. With tears in our eyes to the memory of those who have fallen, with earnest sympathy for those who mourn and those who suffer, and with proud gratification in the unflinching courage and persistent devotion and grand achievement of our troops, especially those of our own State, we gird ourselves for fresh toil. And the sons of liberty will flock to her standard, and wives and mothers will give their dear ones to the sacrifice, and the Church will consecrate them with her prayers, and patriotism will meet the heavy expense; and setting up our banners in the name of the Lord, we will do valiantly — through the strength of the Lord, we will do valiantly; and our enemies — alas! alas! they are our fellow-citizens, and we weep to think that we must fight against them; but they are fighting against their country and ours; and now nothing but the sword can cure the delusion or settle the dispute — they will at length yield, and we shall be preserved. Liberty, my friends, has had its mar-

tyrs in all ages. Those who die fighting for their country in a righteous cause are heroes who shall be ever honored. Only let us keep near to God; let us not be boastful or self-confident, but humble and trustful. They who forget God in the time of prosperity, and are greatly elated with success, are most depressed when reverses come. We may be mistaken; surely we have no claim on God by reason of any righteousness of ours; our skirts are by no means clean, and this war is doubtless to be regarded in the light of a judicial as well as a providential discipline. We may be mistaken in our hopes of the future, and God may see it best that we should be broken to pieces, and cease to have a place and a name among nations. Still, right here, just as our national anniversary has once more come and gone, here, amid the wailings over the beloved and honored dead; here, amid whatever there is of gloom and depression because of recent events, I can not help believing still that God is on our side, and hoping that our country shall be preserved, that peace shall come back to us an undivided nation, that future years shall show the purifying of this furnace, and that the vision of John Adams shall be fulfilled, and the Fourth of July shall be commemorated with pomp and rejoicing "from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward for evermore;" and that here, where the cross and the standard of freedom were planted together, God will be pleased to develop more and more perfectly civil liberty in a true Christian state—a blessing to our people and to the nations of the world.

But now, my friends, as the sounds of the recent celebration have died away into the sacred stillness of the Sabbath, our thoughts turn to a higher and purer liberty, of which civil liberty is but a reflection, and from which it derives its life and worth. For trace back the progress of human freedom, and you will find that it has reached its best and highest exemplification where the Christian religion has most displayed its life. And it is no mere form of speech, but the utterance of an established and important truth, when we say that civil and religious liberty go hand in hand, and the best friends of the Bible are the best friends of human freedom; and the purest Christian makes the best citizen and patriot; and a Christian state is the true and only free state; and so it is not going altogether to a different theme but passing on to higher ground, when we come to speak of the "glorious liberty" which the Gospel proclaims, and which the children of God are permitted to enjoy.

For after all, what is civil liberty worth to us as individuals, comparatively speaking, so long as we have not learned to govern ourselves, and are still the servants of sin? Is not he "the free man whom the truth makes free"? "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." A state of sin is the darkest slavery. "Who-soever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Every one knows

that there is no task-master so tyrannous as our own sinful nature, our own passion or self-will. No conquest is so hard as self-conquest; no victory so grand as self-control. "Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." And "he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." (Proverbs 25 : 28.) Many a man loud in praise of liberty, and asserting his rights as a free and independent citizen, is the veriest slave of lust. Nay, all of our race are by nature "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity." And what we need, most of all, is the grand deliverance by the grace of God, and the new life of piety which he imparts. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is:

1. Freedom from sin. The child of God is freed from condemnation. The sentence of the law written against him as an impenitent sinner is blotted out, and being justified by faith, he has peace with God. While sin, as a tyrant, holds us as his subjects, the law holds us as prisoners and criminals. But the grace of God which makes us his children bring us out from prison, pardons our offenses, and delivers us from punishment. At the same time the child of God is set free from the dominion of sin. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It is characteristic of the child of God that he walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit. He is not strictly perfect, so that he never errs. He is still imperfect, frail, in the body, and surrounded by temptations; and often has occasion to mourn his errors and offenses. Still he is no longer the slave of sin. He has been redeemed, regenerated, disenthralled. He is the freed man of the Lord. Nay, he is the child of God, having been adopted into God's family; having received, not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but in place of it the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries: Abba, Father.

2. It is freedom from the fear of death. A bondage to the fear of death is a common torment of our race. Men, even without religion, rise above it by various efforts, and under different influences. Patriotism, anger, recklessness, skepticism, busy occupation, may subdue it. But the child of God has a glorious deliverance from it by being lifted above it, with the assurance of a triumph over it, and the enjoyment of a grand life beyond it. He walks by faith, seeing things invisible to mortal eyes, knowing that the light affliction of the moment is to be followed by a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For him Death is robbed of his sting. For the "sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." But he can say: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. Again, this liberty of the Christian is a liberty under law. It is not pure independence. It is not mere license. It is not putting the Christian beyond control. He is still surrounded by

the sovereignty of God and all the defenses of God's holy law. As before remarked, in all God's dealings with us there is no such thing as liberty without law. We as soon think of God's abdicating his throne as of his abolishing the law. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." It is one of the chief beauties and glories of Christian liberty that it is according to law; that it finds its highest delight and completest development in obedience to the law of God, that whilst the life of the Christian flows on like a stream gliding at its own sweet will, it also flows as by a holy instinct in channels and courses of God's appointing, and in accordance with laws of his establishing.

And this leads to the remark that

4. Christian liberty is a spontaneous obedience to God. It is a new life, the life of God's children. Children are bound to obey their parents; but the relation which they sustain to them must ever be nearer, and more ennobling and free than that of servants. That man has no correct idea of the worth, the meaning, the beauty of the parental relation, who treats his children simply as servants, subject to his caprices, to be used only for the furtherance of his selfish ends. God does not treat his children so, and they do not feel toward him simply as his servants, rendering a fearful, a legal, a compulsory obedience. They are his subjects, his servants, bound to obey the slightest intimations of his will. But they are more. Christ said to his disciples: "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends, for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth." But even more than friends, they are children. They are adopted into his family. But it is even a closer relationship than that. The blood of the parent flows in the veins of the child. The child receives the nature of the parent. God imparts his Spirit to his children. They become partakers of a divine nature. In their measure they love as God does; they live out the spirit that is in them; they engage spontaneously, naturally, that is, according to their renewed nature, in his service. It is their joy, the impulse of their spiritual life, to do that which pleases God. It has come into their souls as a vital principle to glorify God and enjoy him forever; and all their living is modified and controlled by this; and their happiness is found in their completest service of God. It is natural for the light to shine; for the flower to bloom in beauty and send out its fragrance; for the bird to sing its joyousness; for the meadow to smile in rich verdure beneath the summer showers and sun; and all this is according to strict, unvarying law. So the child of God spontaneously serves him, loves to worship him, loves to help forward his cause, loves to practice holiness, not simply because God requires him to do so, but because it is in his heart to do so; because his heart has been renewed, is sanctified, governed by a holy principle. This is the highest liberty, the liberty of a sanctified nature, of a will made free in holiness. This is the lib-

erty of the flower blooming in the garden, of the bird sweetly caroling in the tree, or winging its flight unrestrained through the air. But it is vastly more. It is the freedom of the holy angels who do God's will in heaven: there unbroken and complete, here imperfect because of the defilement of sin not at once eradicated, and the presence of temptation. For the child of God often sighs because he does that which he would not, and longs to be delivered from the body of this death. Yet it is his great joy that his heart is set to do God's will. And these unwilling aberrations, these repeated failures, while they serve to keep him humble and watchful, also serve to enhance the glory and gladness of the hour of full release, and entrance on the perfect service of God in the heavenly home.

5. For consider that this is a perpetual liberty never to be interrupted.

The children of God shall never again become the willing bond-slaves of sin, and shall attain to a perfect love and freedom from all sin, and complete satisfaction in the likeness of God. "For I am persuaded," says Paul, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Preserved unto the end of this life by the grace of God, his children shall all be received into his heavenly home, and there they shall be free indeed, free from all imperfection, from all sorrow, serving God gladly forever in the untarnished beauty of holiness.

6. Finally, let it be considered, that this liberty is wrought out for us through suffering, and bestowed on us by the grace of God.

All redemption, all advance of human freedom, has been secured through suffering and sacrifice. Liberty has had its heroes and its martyrs, through whom its deliverances and triumphs have been achieved. Each onward step, each successive achievement, has been at the cost of human lives, of pains, and agonies.

In how much higher, holier sense is this true of this glorious liberty of the children of God! It comes to us as the purchase of the self-sacrifice of the Son of God. He came down from heaven and died to redeem us. Before him all the heroism of the champions of civil freedom, all martyrdoms for humanity, pale and sink into insignificance; or rather they are the far-off reflections of his glory, just as all human liberty is a faint coruscation from that resplendent redemption which he wrought out. For this grand liberty, as for all minor blessings, we are indebted to the cross of Christ, to the grace of God, which bringeth salvation. The price of this glorious liberty was the precious blood of Christ; the incarnation and suffering and death of the Son of God. Let it be added here, that as civil liberty is to be preserved only by unceasing vigilance, so does the enjoyment and preservation of this boon,

gift as it is of God's grace, and continued to us by his kindness, demand of us unceasing watchfulness, lest it degenerate into license, or we, being found off our guard, shall become again the captives of the devil.

Now, my friends, is not this a "glorious liberty," this liberty of the children of God? Natural liberty is freedom to act as one chooses without restraint, except from the laws of one's own being. Civil liberty is natural liberty controlled and guarded by right laws for the general good. Religious liberty is the right to hold religious opinions, and to worship God, according to the convictions of one's reason, and the approval of one's conscience, unrestrained by any human power. The liberty of God's children is a heart set free from sin, loving and practicing what is right, delighting to do God's will, rejoicing in his friendship, and having a sure prospect of perpetual and perfect bliss in holiness. To be delivered from the condemnation of the law, and the dominion of sin; to be made a child of God; to have the spirit of the Lord in our hearts, and to live superior to passion and to worldliness and to the fear of death; with the blissful anticipation of a perfection of holiness, in which every emotion of the heart shall be right, and a happiness like to that of God himself, shall be ours perpetually—is not that a "glorious liberty," greatly to be desired for ourselves and for others?

And if it is ours, dear friends, what thanksgivings are now welling up to God in our hearts! What "good matter" of praise are we now "inditing!" If it is ours, how should the contemplation of its beauty and excellence, and of the favor of God in bestowing it on us, lead us to watch against all sin—to purify ourselves as he is pure! How should we strive to live out the character of God's children—to live up to our high calling—to be, not worldly, but heavenly-minded; not selfish, but self-denying; not fearful, but rejoicing; "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer," comforted under all afflictions, with its sweet peace and blissful assurances! Oh! how shall God's dear children, emancipated into so "glorious liberty," be slaves to sin, or in bondage to fear?

And if this be ours, and we know something of its preciousness, will we not strive to impart it to others? to proclaim liberty to the captives? to free all we can from the bondage of sin, and introduce them into the glorious liberty of the children of God?

Say, my hearers, who of you does not desire this liberty? And will you make no effort to obtain it? Will you not accept it freely from the grace of God? Do you boast of civil liberty? Do you make great sacrifices to secure and to maintain it? Does your bosom swell with conscious greatness, as you boast yourself a citizen of a grand republic, a free man? And will you count nothing too dear, not even life itself, to be expended for the maintenance of such freedom in its integrity? Behold this higher liberty gracing, dignifying, sanctifying all else; giving an inex-

pressible charm to all that is beautiful and good in earthly living, and bestowing on you the freedom of the city of our God, which is everlasting. And will you not strive to attain to it? Are you unwilling to make any sacrifice to secure it?

Do you love your country? Who does not love it? To whose heart have not the storms and struggles of the past year made it dearer than ever? You can not better serve your country than by serving the Lord. Whatever be the position you occupy, whatever the capacity of your citizenship, the love of God in your heart, the practice of godliness in your life, will enhance your usefulness, your ability to do good to the state. Piety must be our preservation. Righteousness alone exalteth a nation in continuance; and national righteousness depends on the righteousness of individuals. The purest patriotism is enriched and strengthened by the humblest piety.

It was a glorious day, my hearers, when Moses led Israel forth from bondage, and the shores of the Red Sea and the distant rocky hills resounded with their anthem to the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, and cast the horse and his rider into the deep, and given deliverance to his people. It was a glorious day when Gideon, waving his sword, in the name of Jehovah, put to flight the army of his enemies, and ransomed Israel from her oppressors. And glorious was it when our fathers signed the Declaration of Independence, and the old bell in Philadelphia rung out the glad tidings upon the air, which wafted them up to the waves of Boston harbor, and the hills of New-Hampshire, and down across the slopes of Virginia and the plains of Georgia; tidings that proclaimed the birth of a new republic, a nation of freemen, a republic, which, please God, shall yet stand in its integrity to be the admiration and joy of unborn ages.

But that was a far surpassing glory when Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven to our earth proclaiming liberty to the captives, pardon to the condemned, salvation to the perishing, and leading up his redeemed in countless numbers to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy.

It is a grand thing, my friends, to be a citizen of a free republic, with all its immunities, its guards of liberty, and its untrammelled freedom. We thank God for our civil institutions; and right in the midst of the storm that is now dashing upon them and testing their seaworthiness and the firmness of their anchorage, we say hopefully: Please God, they shall be perpetuated, they shall outride the storm, and shall be dearer and purer than ever.

But here is the great commonwealth of God. Here is the state that guarantees equal rights to all, whose law is love, whose peace is deep-seated and perpetual, whose destiny is everlasting prosperity. Citizenship in it is the highest honor, and richest happiness. Its progress is sure; its triumph is decreed. Blessed are they who are enrolled among its citizens. Its sway shall be co-extensive with the earth. Its glorious consummation shall be

in the circles of eternity ; the glad service, the enlarged delights of heaven.

And who does not desire its spread over the earth ? What a glad time will it be when this commonwealth shall have extended its authority and diffused its immunities every where ! Then wars and fightings shall cease, and universal righteousness give universal peace. It seems as if the whole creation, the irrational as well as the rational, animate and inanimate, were looking forward to that time ; were anxiously awaiting its redemption from all the evils in which sin has involved it ; a joyous participation in the redemption of God's children ; a restoration of the beauty and harmony and bliss of Eden, when the great Creator looked, pleased, on all his works and pronounced them very good. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. Because the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is the end toward which all things are tending. This is the good time, the coming glory. How far there shall be a literal renovation of the world who can tell ? But that a new moral life, indwelling righteousness, shall beautify our race and make the desert blossom as the rose, we all believe. The under-current of the restless ocean of human existence is setting toward this. The convulsions that upheave society, these wars and changes that distress us, are helping forward the coming kingdom, which can not be shaken. The sufferings that nations and communities and individuals, struggling, toiling, dying, in support of human freedom and Gospel truth, endure, are the prices at which the glorious liberty is to be secured.

And then, all the earthly glory, however great, is to be unspeakably transcended in heaven. The dawn of this liberty of God's children gladdens us here ; there it shall brighten into perfect day. The full "manifestation of the sons of God" will be after the great day of resurrection and judgment. But even now God's children are constantly going to their blessed redemption. Day by day, all down the years, the vast triumphant throng have been marching to the home of peace. From the fires of martyrdom, from the gory field of battle, from the lowly bed of sickness, from the tender nursing of loving friends, by the cruel stroke of bitter enemies, the children of God are set at liberty, and go to behold his face in righteousness.

God grant that as you and I, dear friends, one by one receive our summons at the hand of death, we may be ready, through the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, to enter into the unalloyed fruition of that glorious liberty.